AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

Entered as second-class matter September 26, 1912, at the Post Office at Washington, D. C., under the Act of August, 24, 1912. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Sec. 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized July 13, 1918.

WHOLE NO. 1244 — WILLIAM GREEN, President — WASHINGTON, D. C., SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1935 — FRANK MORRISON, Secretary — VOL. 25, NO. 7

We must not promise what we ought not, lest we be called upon to perform what we cannot.—Lincoln.

Editorials

Prevailing Rates Essential

The fight over the incorporation of a prevailing wage rate clause in the pending House Joint Resolution 117, which is the Administration's $3,880,000,000 Work Relief Bill, may be a successor to the renowned "Judge Parker case." Thirty-six Senators who opposed the interests of wage earners in that case only five years ago are not now in the Senate.

Labor regards this clause as essential. The prevailing wage principle under the circumstances is necessary to the welfare of all working people and to the progress of the country as a whole. Labor will, therefore, fight with all the energy and resources at its command, ever mindful of the public interest.

President Green said before the Senate Appropriations Committee:

"It is exceedingly unsound to offer additional employment by means of a work program and at the same time reduce the total income of the wage earner in private employment because of a general reduction in the wage level."

Labor does not object to limiting the amount which those on relief work may receive per month. There is no objection to the $50 a month maximum, as suggested. But there is sound and reasonable objection to making a person go out and work the entire month at a skilled trade for such a pitiable amount. There is every economic and social reason why such a situation should not exist.

The bill, already passed by the House in practically its original form, and approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee with a few minor amendments, including the objectionable Russell substitute for Senator McCarran's original prevailing wage amendment, now goes to the Senate for final action. The Senate contains a number of progressive and liberal gentlemen who are held in high esteem by labor and it is felt that these gentlemen also recognize the fact that the payment of prevailing wage rates in each respective community is essential. Labor, therefore, feels that this fight will be won upon the sound basis of merit.

The President Speaks

Labor officials generally agree that the public has been inclined to give undue credence to many wild stories appearing in the daily press, presuming to assert that a breach of understanding and even a lack of confidence developed between organized labor and the President of the United States.

No responsible labor newspaper has repeated this assertion, of course, for the simple reason that no such breach or lack of confidence has ever developed. And no responsible labor official has attacked the President.

Labor representatives have on occasion found it necessary to speak the truth frankly with respect to the attitude and activities of certain individual members of the Administration, but none has found it either necessary or desirable to speak ill of President Roosevelt.

The President now is familiar with the position of organized labor on several vital subjects, for the executive council of the American Federation of Labor was received at the White House and afforded the opportunity to present its collective views.

The President's statement in response appears elsewhere in this issue, along with the Executive Council's general statement. A careful perusal of these documents is indeed enlightening. The President's statement closes with a paragraph that strikes a responsive chord in the hearts of all wage earners, for it expresses their ideal:

"We are seeking to promote peace, cooperation and understanding in all of the industries of the United States between labor and management, to the end that we can eliminate the inequities and institute practical and scientific stabilization for the common good of all those engaged in industry as well as for the nation itself."

Jurisdictional Disputes in Building Industry May Be Avoided in Future

Organized Building Crafts Agree To Plan For Settlement Of Disputes Which Gains Wide Approval; 2,000,000 Men Affected.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington.—Building trades unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor have agreed upon a plan for settlement of jurisdictional disputes between themselves, under the code of fair competition for the three-billion dollar construction industry, normally employing some 2,000,000 workers, NRA Division Administrator George L. Berry announced.

The plan deals with "jurisdictional" disputes. These are controversies between trade unions, arising when union representatives are unable, for various reasons, to agree which union membership shall perform certain duties on a building job.

High Approval

Division Administrator Berry issued the following statement:

"Under direction of the President, negotiations have been conducted for some months seeking to solve perhaps one of the greatest economic abuses of the construction industry of the United States, namely, jurisdictional disputes, and I am pleased to be able to say that the President's insistence in this matter has brought it to a finality. An agreement has been signed by all of the international building trades unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor to definitely settle all jurisdictional disputes through the machinery that has been set up in the Planning and Adjustment Board of the construction industry code."

The Executive Council of the Building Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor stated: "It is, in our opinion, the most practical plan for the settlement of jurisdictional disputes that has ever been created, and we believe when put into practice will bring about a decided improvement in the construction industry."

Nineteen Internationals

A list of the unions affected include the following:

International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers; International Brotherhood of Bricklayers and Stone Masons and Helpers; Brick Layers, Masons and Plasterers' International Union; International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers; United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; International Union of Elevator Constructors; International Union of Operating Engineers; Granite Cutters' International Association; International Hod Carriers, Builders and Common Laborers' Union; Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers' Union; International Association of Marble, Stone and Slate Polishers, Rubbers and Sawyers, Tile and Marble Setters' Helpers and Terrazzo Workers' Helpers; Sheet Metal Workers' International Association; Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers; Operative Plasterers and Cement Finishers' International Association; United Association of Journeymen Plumbers and Steam Fitters; United Slate, Tile and Composition Roofers, Damp and Waterproof Workers' Association; Journeymen Stone Cutters' Association; International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen and Helpers.

NRA Calls Hearings Of Graphic Arts To Consider Overlapping

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington.—The NRA has announced that a public hearing will be held March 7 to April 4 to guide the administration in eliminating unnecessary overlaps between the graphic arts code and other codes.

The hearings will be limited to establishments or industries which actually perform printing operations upon their products. Private plants are not included.

The announcement was issued by Division Administrators J. F. Battley and Jack B. Tate as the call of a single hearing, to begin March 7. Dates were assigned for more than 40 industries with special processes involving printing operations. Other industries with such processes may apply for a hearing.

A. F. OF L. SURVEYS COMPANY UNION GROWTH

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington.—A survey of the growth of company unions throughout the United States, together with the collection and assembly of numerous details in connection with them, is now under way.

A special questionnaire form has been sent to all directly affiliated unions, secretaries of all central bodies, organizers and others, by William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor. Organizations in all sections of the country are asked to gather the necessary data, fill in the form and send it in to headquarters at once.

The results of the survey may be used as evidence in connection with pending Federal legislation and in such other manner as may be desirable.

Fight for Prevailing Rates in Work Relief Bill Carried to The Senate Floor

Substitute for McCarran Amendment, Adopted by Committee, Objectionable

PRESIDENT GREEN BRINGS OUT FACTS

Original Amendment Carried 12 to 8, February 7; Substitute Adopted 14 To 9, Upon Reconsideration.

VITAL ISSUE IS INVOLVED

Wording Of Original McCarran Amendment And Of Substitute Given Herewith, Together With Other Data.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington.—The substitute for the original McCarran amendment to House Joint Resolution 117, the Public Relief Works Bill, offered by Senator Russell (Ga.), was adopted by the Senate Appropriations Committee, by a vote of 14 to 9, February 13. The Committee was ordered to report the bill favorably to the Senate.

On February 7, the McCarran amendment, providing for payment of prevailing rates for work made in each respective community, but not preventing the limiting of total payments, was adopted by the same committee, 12 to 8. This was "killed" by the Russell substitute.

Official Statement

Following adoption of the Russell substitute amendment, William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, issued the following statement:

"The substitute for the Senator McCarran Amendment adopted by the Appropriations Committee of the United States Senate is unacceptable and unsatisfactory to Labor. We do not regard the substitute referred to as an improvement over the original form of the Public Works Relief Measure.

"The substitute provides for the establishment of a relief wage, lower if necessary than the prevailing rate, in such communities where public relief work is being carried on. It provides that a change in a relief wage can be made only after an investigation discloses that the existence and maintenance of the prevailing rate is threatened. That means we will attempt to right a wrong after the damage has been done.

"Labor will oppose the adoption of the substitute and will call upon the friends of Labor to vote against it. We will appeal to members of the United States Senate to approve the McCarran Resolution providing for the maintenance of the prevailing wage rates in each community when the Public Works Relief Bill is finally acted upon."

Facts Are Presented

When reconsideration of the original McCarran amendment was voted, a new hearing was held. William Green, president of the A. F. of L. appeared on behalf of labor and refuted every argument that had been submitted against payment of prevailing rates.

He definitely proved the insufficiency of relief wages, filed by government representative, and gave ample evidence to justify payment of prevailing rates, by a brilliant array of indisputable facts.

Concluding, President Green said: "If he is [illegible] forced to accept at reduced wage rates, the worker will jeopardize his own future, because he will be unable to return to work in private industry at a much lower rate of compensation."

McCarran Amendment

The original McCarran amendment, as adopted, then superceded by the substitute, was worded as follows:

"On page 6 of an Act of the House (H. J. Res. 117) making appropriations for relief purposes, strike out all of Section 6 and insert the following:

"Section 6. The President is authorized to prescribe, and shall give full publicity to, rules and regulations necessary to carry out the purpose of the joint resolution, provided, however,

"(a) That such rules and regulations shall stipulate that all work done under this joint resolution, whether by contract or otherwise, involving the expenditures of any money appropriated by this joint resolution, shall contain a provision to the effect that all laborers and mechanics employed by the contractor or any subcontractor or the public officer in charge for the United States or the District of Columbia, shall be paid rates of wages not less than the prevailing rate of wages paid for work of a similar nature in the city, town, or village or other civil division of the state in which the work is located, or in the District of Columbia, and that in case any dispute arises as to what are the prevailing rates of wages for work of a similar nature applicable to any work being done under this joint resolution, which cannot be adjusted by the contracting officer of the United States or the public officer in charge of work, the matter shall be referred to the Secretary of Labor for determination and his decision thereon shall be conclusive and binding.

"(b) Rules and regulations prescribed under this section shall not abrogate any existing law.

"(c) Any willful violation of any rules or regulations made by the President under this section shall be punishable by a fine of $5,000."

Substitute Amendment

Following is the wording of the Russell substitute amendment, against which labor is putting up a strenuous fight:

"The President is authorized to fix the rates of pay of all persons compensated out of the funds appropriated by this joint resolution and may fix different rates for various types of work, which rates need not be uniform throughout the United States.

"In the event the President, or such official or agency of government as he may select, shall determine after an investigation that the rate of wages paid is affecting adversely or is likely to decrease the prevailing rates of wages paid for any work of a similar nature in any city, town, village or other civil division of the state in which the work is located, or in the District of Columbia, the President, or the official or agency designated by him, shall immediately fix the rate of wages at an amount not less than the prevailing rate of wages paid for work of a similar nature in each locality.

"Any and all contracts which may be entered into under the authority contained in this resolution shall contain stipulations which will provide for the accomplishment of the purposes of this section."

Vital Issues Involved

The prevailing rate amendment, offered by Senator McCarran, and for which labor is fighting with all its strength, due to the vital issues involved, merely extends the chief provision of the Davis-Bacon Act to cover Government relief work. The latter act provides for payment of prevailing rates in each respective community on all Government projects.

It has always been the tendency for employers to reduce wage rates at every opportunity, and particularly to follow Government decisions. Labor does not ask that relief workers be paid the full-time prevailing wages of their respective communities, but agrees to the suggested maximum of $50 per month; but it insists that this amount is to be paid and should be paid only on the basis of the local prevailing hourly rates. The attainment of this principle is regarded as essential to the welfare of all working people and to the progress of the country as whole. Labor will therefore insist by every means at its command upon payment of prevailing rates.

HOOVER SUCCEEDS HOWE AS CONSUMERS' COUNSEL

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington.—Dr. Calvin B. Hoover, former economic advisor in the Agriculture Adjustment Administration, has succeeded Dr. Frederic C. Howe as consumers' counsel of the AAA, in a general shake-up through which several staunch public servants were "let out."

Dr. Hoover assumed complete charge of the work of current analyses of the economic effects upon consumers and producers of production programs and marketing agreements undertaken by the administration, under the director, regarded as a reactionary.

Many believe the big processors and middlemen will now have free rein to exercise complete domination of the AAA. Repercussions of the event are finding their way to progressive Congressmen and Senators, which is expected to result in a thorough investigation of the AAA, with startling revelations.

SENATORS GET THANKS OF ORGANIZED LABOR

Following the signing of the bill, February 12, containing the McCarran amendment, restoring the remaining 5 per cent of the government pay cut, Senator McCarran was thanked by Labor officials to appear before the A. F. of L. Executive Council to accept labor's thanks and immediately complied. He was accompanied by Senator Schwellenbach, of Washington, who recently introduced a resolution calling for investigation of labor conditions in the automobile industry.

The occasion was a veritable ovation of thanks. President Green stated: "We consider it a great privilege to welcome you here. You are in the home of your friends. Those present are those who have been in the vanguard of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor and of the Joint Wage Negotiation Conference of the A. F. of L. which was in charge of our activities in support of wage legislation for government employees."

Senator McCarran made a splendid response: "This is an outstanding event in my career," he stated. "This great organization, through its Executive Council, speaks for the toilers, representing 99 per cent of the people of the country."

Senator Schwellenbach made a similarly brilliant response. Among his remarks was this significant statement: "One of labor's great problems is to make the masses of the unorganized understand that your program is for the unselfish benefit of all."

PROFITS FOLLOW FAIR WAGE RATES

Monthly Survey Of Business Issued By A. F. Of L. Shows Organization Issue Of First Importance.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington.—The Monthly Survey of Business, compiled by the capable research staff of the American Federation of Labor, for February, directs the attention of industry and commerce to an outstanding moral: "Raise wages first; profits will follow."

"The year 1935 has opened with business well above last year's level," the Survey states. "The Annalist index of business activity in December was 9 per cent above last December, and preliminary figures for January show an increase to a point over January, 1934. Business is in its fourth rise since the summer of 1932, and has reached a level 22 per cent above the depression bottom. Nevertheless it is still 30 per cent below normal. Since September, 1934, industry has picked up rapidly to the 80 per cent level.

"Prospects for the next few months are not yet clear. Business observers expect that industry will at least hold its present level through the spring season; whether it will rise above this level depends on factors still in the making.

Profits Go Up

"Two significant facts in the recent course of business stand out: (1) In spite of rises and declines, business has kept well above the low level of March, 1933. Increased buying power of workers and farmers has been the chief factor in sustaining this higher level. (2) Business profits have increased in these two years; the financial condition of business firms in general has improved so that, in the spring of 1935, many more firms are in a position to profit by a rising activity than in any of the three previous years.

"The present rise of business activity is of fundamental significance to labor. For increasing production will now place many firms in a position to pay higher wages. Increasing production reduces unit production costs and thus makes higher wage payments possible.

"It is a well-known fact that industry cannot recover from depression and production cannot be lifted to higher levels unless workers' buying power increases greatly above its present volume. . . . Under present conditions wages must be raised first; profits will then follow.

Organization Essential

"Experience under NRA has shown that strong union organization is necessary to increase workers' income. . . . If industry is to produce today's output today, strong trade union organization, with power to raise wages, is essential. With the increased use of machinery in our production processes, workers are sharing less and less in the profits created by their work. . . . Union organization has become an issue of first importance in the business picture."

Substitute Postal Employes Suffer From Low Wages and Part-Time

Editor's Note.—The following article, written for the American Federation of Labor Weekly News Service and the Labor Press by M. T. Finnan, Secretary of the National Association of Letter Carriers, describes the deplorable conditions imposed upon substitute city letter carriers and postal clerks by various economy laws enacted by Congress and administration heads. It also outlines the Department and outlines equitable measures to remedy the injustices.

By M. T. FINNAN
Secretary, National Association of Letter Carriers

Few people realize how hard the postal substitutes were hit by the various economy laws and the depression.

A substitute city letter carrier or post office clerk must take a civil service examination. He must be of good, moral character, well educated and above the ordinary in physical condition. When appointed he must furnish a bond of $1,000 for the faithful performance of duty, and if a city letter carrier, must provide his uniforms a year, one for summer and one for winter. He is required to report and be available for duty at times scheduled by the postmaster.

His rate of pay is 65 cents an hour for time actually worked. A substitute may be required to report at 8 o'clock in the morning and find there is no work for him. Many instances have occurred where substitutes have reported day in and day out and have only had two or three days' work in a month.

Menaced With Starvation

These men must be available for duty whenever called upon, and for that reason have been unable to secure other employment. During the days of the depression, when people without work were on relief, the substitute was denied relief because he was technically on the payroll of the government. The substitutes would have starved but for the relief given them by their fellow workers. The substitutes suffered the wage cuts due to the vicious laws enacted in the name of economy.

Denied Regular Appointments

Some of these men have served as long as 12 years and are yet awaiting regular appointments. During the last few years the Post Office Department has not filled vacancies occurring by death, resignation, removal or retirement. Recently, however, the department has filled many vacancies, but there are still many vacancies that should be filled.

Through the efforts of Congressman James M. Mead, of Buffalo, N. Y., chairman of the House Post Office Committee, and other sympathetic Congressmen, $1,000,000 was added to the appropriation for pay of clerks and a like amount for letter carriers, to promote substitutes to regular positions after July 1, 1935, provided the department desired to expend the money for this purpose.

In all justice to the substitutes where there is eight hours' work that can be performed by a clerk by substitutes, they should be appointed to regular positions, and their plight would be materially relieved if the department would follow this practice.

Sweatshop Methods Condemned

Many substitutes who have served a little money prior to their appointment, have spent their savings. They have been forced to give up insurance. They have lost their homes because they could not make the necessary payments. They have been unable to give their children proper medical and dental attention because their health has suffered through inability to secure adequate medical and dental attention. The hardships of substitutes are the result of sweatshop and so moving that it is hard to believe that the government would resort to "sweatshop" methods to save the trifling amount involved by the practice. It is unfortunate that it is almost unbelievable.

If the Post Office Department should give to the American people the postal service to which they are entitled, fill vacancies in regular positions by the promotion of substitutes, and appoint substitutes as regular employes when there is eight hours' work daily for them, it would in a small measure relieve their present deplorable condition.

CENTRAL BODY GROWS

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Milwaukee, Wis.—The increase in the number of delegates to the Federated Trades Council here, from 250 to more than 600, has compelled the council to consider the advisability of securing larger quarters than Brisbane Hall, where the central body has convened for many years. The marked growth in membership is the result of intensive organization drives since the enactment of the National Industrial Recovery Act.

Cigarette and Tobacco Industry Code Approved; Very Unsatisfactory

FEDERAL PAY CUT TO BE RESTORED

President Roosevelt Signs Bill With McCarran Amendment, Carrying Final 5 Per Cent Restoration April 1.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington.—One of the five major points of the current legislative program of the American Federation of Labor was realized with the signing, February 13, by President Roosevelt, of the Joint Resolution making appropriation for the Federal Communications Commission, to which an amendment by Senator McCarran was attached, restoring the final 5 per cent of the Government pay cut, effective April 1.

It is estimated this will mean an additional $16,000,000 in the pay envelopes of government workers. The original McCarran amendment called for restoration as of January 1, but an alteration of the amendment by Senator Byrnes, making an effective date April 1, was accepted as a compromise.

The American Federation of Labor organized the Joint Conference for Government Wage Restoration, which carried on the successful fight in the interest of all.

INCREASE WAGE RATES IN PAPER INDUSTRIES

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Small wage increases for approximately 25,000 workers in the paper and pulp industry will result from a code amendment which has been approved by the President.

Simultaneously, the NRA announced approval of a similar amendment to the paper box code, which is expected to raise wages above the minimum for about 2,000 employes in that industry.

The amendments are the result of voluntary agreement between NRA and both industries, and represent the largest wage increase thus far effected through code revisions. They became effective as of February 6.

The amendments will increase by two cents per hour the present minimums for clerks of $15 and $16 a week. The 40 cents an hour minimum under the code has been 33 cents in the North and 30 cents in the central area. The minimum rate of 30 cents per hour for female workers in the South remains in the code unchanged.

Minimum rates of pay for office workers are now ranging from $13 to $15 per week, depending upon population, and have been revised upward. This class of employes will, under the amendment, receive $16 per week in the North, $15 in the central zone, and $14 in the South, regardless of population.

The normal number of workers in the industry was between 112,000 and 125,000. The total payroll for May, 1933, was at a rate of about $100,000,000. NRA's Research and Planning Division estimates the amendment just approved will increase the industry's payrolls by 4 per cent.

Code Of "Big Four" Put Over On The Administration, While Suggestions Of Labor Are Ignored.

Boycott Of Big Non-Union Cigarette And Tobacco Firms May Result, Ornburn And Evans Announce.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington.—In a joint statement issued by I. M. Ornburn, president of the Cigar Makers' International Union, and E. Lewis Evans, president of the Tobacco Workers' International Union, holds that the code approved for this industry is "a ghastly reflection on the reorganized NRA" and threatens a national boycott on the individual firms responsible for the code.

The statement says of the code's approval that those accepting it "failed to take note of the hundreds of families of tobacco workers who have been on relief because of the pitifully low wages paid by this wealthy industry.

"The hour provisions will not apply to many of the effective officials insist, adding: "The code as signed makes no provision against the stretch-out and the speed-up, both of which are evils which defeat all wage increases in this industry.

"But labor will not submit supinely to the insult administered by this code. Labor is prepared to organize a national boycott of the products of these companies that proposed the industry's code.

"Those companies of an industry which has a labor cost of only two (2) per cent of wholesale value, that have enjoyed an enormous profit while nearly all other industry was operating at a loss, are not entitled to the patronage of labor anywhere."

Code Features

The new code covers the cigarette, snuff, chewing and smoking tobacco industry. It was approved by President Roosevelt February 9 and becomes effective February 18.

The code contains labor provisions only. It establishes a basic 40-hour work week and an eight-hour day, with minimum wages from 25 to 40 cents an hour in the North, 35 cents in the central zone, and 20 cents in the South. The increase also applies to factories which maintain rates under the code has been 23 cents in the North and 20 cents in the central area. The minimum rate of 30 cents per hour for female workers in the South remains in the code unchanged.

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Statistics Of Industry

The industry covered by this code consists of a few very large units and a greater number of small establishments.

Production of cigarettes has been increasing, other products of the industry declining.

The tendency has been toward concentration. The number of establishments in the cigarette industry declined from 61 in 1923 to 14 in 1931, while the number of establishments in the tobacco and snuff branches declined from 206 to 125 in the same period. It is estimated that the "Big Four" firms produce 85 per cent of all cigarettes made. These companies also produce the bulk of the chewing and smoking tobacco. The manufacture of snuff is concentrated in about five companies.

The majority of the industry's plants are located in the South. In 1933, plants in North Carolina, Virginia and Kentucky produced 92 per cent of all cigarettes.

An advisory committee of five members to be selected by the industry, subject to approval by the board, will serve as a point of contact between the board and the industry." Labor will not be represented.

PRESIDENT GREEN TO TOUR AUTO CENTERS

Speaks In Cleveland February 17, To Be Followed By Nine Other Addresses In Seven Days.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington.—William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor will make a speaking tour of the principal automobile centers of the country, beginning in Cleveland, Ohio, February 17.

Ten addresses have been scheduled in as many cities, covering a full week. The final address of the series will be delivered in Detroit, on February 23.

A general conference of representatives of all automobile workers' unions affiliated with the A. F. of L. has been called for Detroit, to begin February 23.

SEED TRADE CODE APPROVED

The National Industrial Recovery Board has announced approval of a code of fair competition for the seed trade, which sets the processing and distribution of seeds at wholesale and/or retail, except the distribution at retail of seeds in packages of eight ounces or less. The code becomes effective February 11.

A 40-hour maximum work week is provided with many exceptions.

Minimum weekly wages are provided, based upon population and the length of the week. The minimum hourly rate is also based on population and ranges from 40 to 35 cents per hour. A submininum rate is established for certain employees doing specified light work.